

Minutes
State Board of Education
Thursday, April 9, 2020

The Arkansas State Board of Education (State Board) met Thursday, April 9, 2020, via Zoom video conferencing. Chair Ms. Diane Zook called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Ms. Zook led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Ms. Diane Zook, Chair; Ms. Charisse Dean, Vice-Chair; Dr. Sarah Moore; Mr. Brett Williamson; Dr. Fitz Hill; Ms. Kathy McFetridge; Ms. Ouida Newton; Ms. Susan Chambers; Ms. Stacey McAdoo, 2019 Arkansas Teacher of the Year; and Mr. Johnny Key, Secretary

Absent: None

Ms. Zook noted that April is Month of the Military Child. She also expressed appreciation for all those working on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic (healthcare workers, grocery store workers, cashiers, and other essential businesses).

Changes to the Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Consent Agenda

Ms. Newton said, on item 15, that she appreciated the tier approach the Warren School District has for novice teachers. Ms. Zook asked Public School Program Advisor Ms. Kelly McLaughlin to have the school district analyze data regarding why growth at the high school has gone down over the past three years.

1. Minutes
2. Review of Loan and Bond Applications
3. Newly Employed, Promotions and Separations
4. Consideration of Report on Waivers to School Districts for Teachers Teaching Out of Area for Longer than Thirty (30) Days, Ark. Code Ann § 6-17-309
5. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case # 19-060 Lucas Horn
6. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case # 19-178 Jacqueline Camper
7. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case # 20-030 Breanna Pruette
8. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case # 20-038 David Smith
9. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case # 20-047 Celia Wortham
10. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case # 20-051 Rebecca Dwyer
11. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case # 20-058 Kurt Zen-Ruffinen
12. Bauxite School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report

13. Beebe School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report
14. Rector School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report
15. Warren School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report

Ms. Dean moved, seconded by Dr. Moore, to accept the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Agenda A

A-1 Request for Transfer of Succeed Scholarship: Harpole

Ms. Zook reviewed the details of this item is Deputy General Counsel Ms. Courtney Salas-Ford's absence. The Harpole family requests approval to transfer their scholarship from Christ (Lutheran) Little Rock to Holy Souls.

Ms. Dean moved, seconded by Dr. Moore, to approve the transfer. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Zook noted that IEPs are still being following during the COVID-19 pandemic, with information being provided via computer packets or thumb drives.

A-2 Consideration of a one-year Standards for Accreditation Waiver Request: Earle School District

Coordinator of Monitoring and Systems Support Ms. Tracy Webb said the Earle School District is requesting a one-year Standards for Accreditation waiver for kindergarten class size. She said they have two kindergarten classrooms with a half-time paraprofessional in each one. Currently they have 45 students enrolled in kindergarten, which is one student over the class size limit. Ms. Webb said the teachers have been consulted and are in agreement with the waiver request.

Ms. Newton moved, seconded by Dr. Hill, to approve the waiver request. The motion passed unanimously.

A-3 Continued Review of Southeast Arkansas Preparatory High School

Coordinator of Monitoring and Systems Support Ms. Tracy Webb said on January 24, 2020, the State Board voted to allow Southeast Arkansas Preparatory High School to remain open until the end of the school year and to return to the State Board in March. In March, the State Board voted to approve the transfer of the Southeast Arkansas Preparatory High School charter to Friendship Aspire Academy, effective June 30, 2020. It was also approved to change the name of the school to Friendship Aspire Southeast Pine Bluff, to waive the Teacher Fair Dismissal Act, to waive Public School Fair Hearing Act, to waive flexibility in awarding course credit, and to waive the standard requiring clock hours for a unit of credit. She said the State Board delayed voting on the charter's request to add grades and to increase the enrollment cap due to the need to review the desegregation analysis. Ms. Webb said Staff Attorney Ms. Mary Claire Hyatt conducted a desegregation analysis and review an analysis by APSRC and found no issues. She said Pine Bluff School District did not submit a desegregation analysis. She said that the State Board is considering the request to add grades 6-8 and to increase the enrollment cap from 220 to 720 students.

APSRC Representative Ms. Scott Smith provided additional information regarding the enrollment cap request.

Ms. Hyatt provided background information on how she conducted the desegregation analysis.

Ms. Newton moved, seconded by Mr. Williamson, to approve the request. The motion passed unanimously.

A-4 Consideration for Final Approval: DESE Rules Governing Home Schools

Staff Attorney Mr. Taylor Dugan said these Rules have been amended to incorporate the changes of Act 429 and 430 of 2019. A public comment hearing was held on October 28, 2019. Public comments were received, but resulted in no substantive changes to the Rules.

Ms. Dean asked clarifying questions on behalf of the homeschool community regarding the public comment period and expressed her concerns. There was some discussion. Mr. Key said the Division would have no issue with delaying action on this item until next month if the State Board preferred.

Ms. Dean moved, seconded by Dr. Hill, to table this item until the May meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

A-5 Consideration of Request for Final Approval: DESE Rules Governing Student Discipline and School Safety

Deputy General Counsel Ms. Courtney Salas-Ford said these Rules were amended to incorporate changes required by Acts 557, 640, 709, and 1029 of 2019. A public comment hearing was held on February 12, 2020. Public comments were received during the public comment period. Revisions were made to the rules, but no substantive changes were made.

Dr. Hill noted his concern that he did not see anything incorporated in the rules about the students being able to complete their work. However, he said that can be something which is addressed at a later date, and these rules can be used as a starting point. Ms. Salas-Ford discussed the current Acts which cover students being able to complete school work, but that she could read through the rules to see how it was or was not stated in that document. She also noted that the Equity Assistance Center plans to begin random sampling of student discipline policies and offering assistance as needed, and sharing best practices.

Dr. Hill moved, seconded by Ms. McFetridge, to grant final approval. The motion passed unanimously.

A-6 Consideration of Request for Final Approval: DESE Rules Governing Special Education and Related Services, Sec. 11.00 Discipline Procedures

Deputy General Counsel Ms. Courtney Salas-Ford said these Rules were amended to incorporate changes required by Act 557 of 2019. A public comment hearing was held on February 12, 2020. One public comments was received, and technical corrections were completed.

Ms. Dean moved, seconded by Ms. Newton, to grant final approval. The motion passed unanimously.

A-7 Consideration of Legislative Report: Dollarway School District

Dr. Hernandez introduced the report for Dollarway School District. He noted that he has sent the State Board members a link to the presentation slides and asked if the members had any questions.

Ms. Newton asked what the district's status was as far as the exit criteria. Dr. Hernandez said that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their ability to get some of the qualitative data. He said that they were encouraged by some of the interim data that had been seen from fall to winter. Dr. Hernandez and Mr. Key said the team would be considering potential updates to the exit criteria. There was some discussion on potential options for finding comparable data points.

Ms. Newton moved, seconded by Ms. Dean, to accept the report. The motion passed unanimously.

A-8 Consideration of Legislative Report: Pine Bluff School District

Dr. Hernandez introduced the report for the Pine Bluff School District. He noted that he has sent the State Board members a link to the presentation slides and asked if the members had any questions.

Ms. Newton asked how current events and no in-person classes would affect the graduation rate. Dr. Hernandez said the district was on track to have a higher graduation rate and there are specific plans to help seniors during this time. Ms. Zook asked a clarifying question regarding decodable text which were ordered, as well as asked question regarding professional development for teachers.

Ms. McFetridge moved, seconded by Ms. Dean, to accept he report. The motion passed unanimously.

A-9 Consideration of Legislative Report: Little Rock School District

Dr. Hernandez introduced the report for the Little Rock School District. He noted that he has sent the State Board members a link to the presentation slides and asked if the members had any questions.

Dr. Moore asked about informal versus formal test observations. Dr. Hernandez said the numbers going up are likely due to the local team putting emphasis on the classroom walkthroughs and observations.

Ms. McFetridge asked if the teachers had been able to keep up with their Professional Learning Communities while they are putting together their AMI plans. Dr. Hernandez said he knows they have done some trainings, but they are not doing the embedded coaching that some district are doing. Mr. Poore, Little Rock School District superintendent provided some additional comments on how Little Rock has been handling their PLC processes. He also explained their AMI processes as well.

Ms. McFetridge moved, seconded by Ms. Newton, to accept the report. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Recommendations from SBE Nominating Committee

Ms. Zook said the State Board Nominating Committee announced their nominees for the next Chair and Vice-Chair. Ms. Dean was nominated as Chair and Mr. Williamson as Vice-Chair for the 2020-2021 school year. There were no additional nominations from the other State Board members. The positions will be voted on during the May State Board meeting.

Reports

State Board Member Reports/Comments

Ms. McAdoo said she is proud of all of the hard work, creativity, and flexibility shown by everyone during this pandemic. She asked, as we are moving forward, that policies and practices around equitable instruction, access to resources, and expectations are reviewed. She said she was excited about the upcoming Virtual Sprit Week celebrations and said they are still in the application process timeframe for the 2021 Arkansas Teacher of the Year. She also acknowledged that students who attended the Student Voice Institute were unable to present to the State Board as originally intended, but she would like to reschedule them to present on a later date.

Ms. Zook said she forwarded her Special Education report to Ms. Windle to be distributed to the State Board members.

Ms. Newton discussed the recent ESSA Steering Committee meeting which was held via Zoom.

Commissioner's Report

Mr. Key stressed the need for flexibility during this time, and said that no one should expect students to be working for six solid hours each day on school work. He praised the work of teacher, parents, administrators, and everyone involved in keeping education going during the pandemic. He said working with Arkansas PBS for Arkansas AMI (Alternative Methods of Instruction) has been a positive experience. Mr. Key also discussed that the Division is looking into how to alter the budget to best accommodate the changes in funding. He asked Chief Information Officer Mr. Arijit Sarkar to review the Transformation Savings Dashboard. State Board members asked a few clarifying questions.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Adjournment

Mr. Williamson moved, seconded by Ms. Dean, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:17 p.m.

Meeting minutes recorded by Tiffany Donovan.